



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

# News Release

August 26, 2005

## **SIX ARRESTED IN ICE OPERATION TARGETING UNAUTHORIZED WORKERS AT FORT IRWIN**

BARSTOW, Calif. – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents today arrested six Mexican nationals who were working illegally for Laurence-Hovenier, Inc., a Corona-based company that does construction framing for commercial and public works projects throughout Southern California, including military housing at Fort Irwin, east of Barstow.

In this morning's operation, ICE agents apprehended the men as they reported for work at the base. The workers, most of whom had security badges authorizing them to enter the U.S. Army base, were identified after agents audited the hiring records of more than 700 Laurence-Hovenier workers. That audit found that more than 40 percent of the employees on the company's payroll may not have been authorized to work in the United States.

Today's operation is part of ICE's worksite enforcement efforts focusing on businesses with ties to security sensitive sites and critical infrastructure facilities -- including airports, military bases, and bio-agriculture industries. Unauthorized workers with access to such sites are vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists, smugglers, traffickers, or other criminals. Fort Irwin houses the National Training Center for army brigade combat teams going to war.

"ICE is using all of the tools and authorities at its disposal to safeguard our nation's sensitive facilities from those who could potentially do us harm," said Gary Pinkava, assistant special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. "When a person uses fraud or false documents to obtain a job, they mask not only their true identities, but also their motives and their criminal history if they have one."

One of the men arrested today had illegally re-entered the United States after a prior deportation and is subject to criminal prosecution. The others will either be voluntarily returned to Mexico or deported after facing administrative charges for violating immigration laws. At least one of the men was found in possession of a counterfeit Alien Registration Card or "green card." ICE's investigation into the construction company's hiring practices is ongoing.

To aid employers, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services operates the Basic Pilot Program, a Web-based system that enables businesses to verify the employment eligibility of newly hired workers. Nationwide, there are more than 20,000 hiring sites using the Basic Pilot Program. Interested employers are urged to call the agency's toll-free number [888-464-4218] to obtain more information about the program.